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UNCLAS ROME 000740

SIPDIS

STATE PASS USDA FOR FAS, APHIS AND FSIS  
FAS FOR ITP/BARRETT AND DLP/WETZEL/DUTROW  
FSIS FOR MCKEE AND SWACINA  
APHIS FOR ACORD AND DEHAVEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [EU](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: NEW FORM OF BSE DISCOVERED IN ITALY

1. Summary. Researchers from several Italian institutions published, in the National Academy of Science, findings that they have identified a second type of mad cow brain-wasting disease, BASE. The U.S. press has given this story much more attention than the Italian press. Italian media reporting on the BASE cases all make reference to the one US case of BSE found in Washington state. Embassy Rome is ready to provide whatever assistance needed on BASE research in Italy. End Summary

2. The team of Italian researchers is from two regional animal disease institutes (Piedmont and Emilia-Romagna) and the Verona University. They announced the discovery of a new form of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy on February 17. The results of the research were submitted for publication to the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science (NAS) November nine, 2003 and published in the February issue of the scientific review. The new disease was detected in two healthy-looking but old (11 and 15 years) cows that tested positive to the BSE test conducted by Italian authorities. The new disease has been named BASE, the acronym for Bovine Amyloidotic Spongiform Encephalopathy.

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3. The discovery and new concerns.  
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The original purpose of the study was to analyze the distribution of prions responsible for BSE in bovines, using 8 samples that had tested positive for BSE. The researchers found an unusual distribution of the prions and the presence of other evidence suggesting that 2 of the 8 animals were affected by the new form of BSE. The characteristics of BASE are very similar to those of the "Subtype two" of the human form of the sporadic Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD). According to an Italian press article, a member of the Italian research team (Dr Monaco), said that the findings of the research suggest two hypotheses:

(a) that BASE could be a sporadic variant of the cattle BSE, therefore not transmitted by infected rendered feed;  
(b) that BASE could be contagious for humans, and could therefore be responsible for some of the CJD found in humans and heretofore considered "sporadic" or "random" and not directly associated with BSE.

4. Along with the Italian study, France and Japan have claimed to have found new forms of BSE. This has led some scientists to speculate that these discoveries could be associated with sporadic CJD. According to Italian media, a scientist from the Verona University went so far as to suggest that 10 to 20 percent of the sporadic CJD human cases could in reality be caused by BASE. It is important to note that at this time there is no scientific evidence to substantiate a link with CJD in humans.

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Next steps.  
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5. The effects of the newly-discovered BASE are currently being tested possible to produce results in the short term, while the Italians believe they can come out with an initial response by autumn 2004.

6. The new discovery has not increased Italian consumers' concerns about BSE. On the contrary, the media tends to stress the fact that the detection of BASE on the examined animals

demonstrates the reliability of the current testing

protocol. That said, most of the press articles  
do make mention of the recent BSE case in the US.  
Some of them also express concern about the  
validity of the US testing system. Sembler

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2004ROME00740 - Classification: UNCLASSIFIED